

Kids grieve too

"Mummy, what you crying for. You crying for Nanna?"

"Yeah baby, Mummy's crying for Nanna!"

"Where Nanna gone Mummy?"

"She's gone to sleep now."

"Wake her up then!"

"No baby, she's gone up in the sky now."

"I want my Nanna."

What is grief?

Sometimes adults can be so sad themselves when something bad happens they forget that their kids are suffering too. Kids grieve too and from an early age, but not in the same way that adults do. They feel the same loss and are likely to show their grief in different ways. They grieve in bursts, that is, they move in and out of grief. One day they will seem to be okay and another day they will show that they are not okay. They often have more needs at this time, and can become more demanding. They are only trying to get comfort, care and support. They are trying to make sense of it all. They often don't have the words to explain their feelings and will show them in the way they behave.

Times when kids grieve

- When a parent or grandparent dies or goes away.
- When a pet dies or gets lost.
- If they have a disability or are in hospital.
- Being injured or abused.

- When they move to a strange place.
- When they have long periods of separation from a parent.
- When they leave behind friends or school.
- When the family splits up.

Kids might show grief by

- Physical pain, such as a headache or stomach ache.
- Sleeping problems or bad dreams.
- Eating problems (not eating or eating too much).
- Fear of being left alone.
- Being naughty or mean to others.
- Being very clingy (wanting to be near certain people).
- Being easily upset and crying a lot.
- Temper tantrums.
- Spending a lot of time alone.
- Blaming themselves.

This tip sheet, along with the full set of Parenting WA guides, is available in electronic format at www.communities.wa.gov.au



These things might help

- Give clear and truthful information in a way they understand.
- Encourage kids to show their feelings. They could write a letter, story, poem, or they could use art to express themselves.
- Share your grief with other adults and seek support for yourself.
- Don't rely on your child for support. You need to support your child.
- Kids will feel better about their own feelings if they see that you are sad too.
- Allow them time to talk and ask questions and share worries.
- Explain to them the physical side of death in a way they might understand.
- Keep as many of the family routines and things they're used to as you can. Too many changes will add further stress.
- Allow them to be involved in the funeral and other family rituals.
- If you are too distressed and can't answer their questions, make sure there is someone who can.
- Kids need to know someone is in control, can keep them safe, and be there for them.
- Let them know it's ok to be sad and that these feelings will pass with time.
- Children need to know what is happening, even if they don't ask.
- Talk to your kids' school to let them know what is happening for them.

The biggest need for kids at a time like this is to be able to be supported and cared for, and to have someone to talk to about it.

Contacts

Parenting WA Line

A free 24/7 telephone information and support service for parents and children pre-birth to 18 years.

t: 1800 654 432 (free call)

w: www.communities.wa.gov.au

The Raising Children Network

Helps parents with the day-to-day decisions of raising children and looking after their own needs.

w: www.raisingchildren.net.au

Health Direct

Offers a health telephone helpline.

t: 1800 022 222

w: www.healthdirect.org.au

Moorditj Yarning

Moorditj Yarning is an Aboriginal-specific program of Relationships Australia WA. Services include counselling, yarning around a broad range of issues, and other programs that Aboriginal community identify as useful: women's art and craft groups, children's traditional and contemporary dance and men's groups.

t: 1300 364 277

w: www.wa.relationships.com.au

Look under "Services we provide" and then look under "Aboriginal services".



Aboriginal Health Services

Contact your local service for a range of health, medical and wellbeing services. Some have women's groups, men's groups and playgroups.

COUNTRY:

Albany	Southern Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9842 7777
Broome	Regional Medical Centre	t: 08 9192 1338
	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service Council	t: 08 9193 6043
	Milliya-Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9192 1699
Bunbury	South West Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9791 2779
Carnarvon	Carnarvon Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9941 2499
Derby	Derby Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9193 1090
Fitzroy Crossing	Marr-Worra-Worra	t: 08 9191 5089
Geraldton	Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9956 6555
Goldfields	Bega Garnbirringu Health Service	t: 08 9091 3199
Halls Creek	Yura Yungi Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9172 0400
Jigalong	Puntukurna Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9175 1027
Kununurra	Ord Valley Aboriginal Medical Service	t: 08 9168 1288
	Waringarri Aboriginal Corporation	t: 08 9168 1528
Onslow	Bindi Bindi Aboriginal Community	t: 08 9184 1086
Roebourne	Mawarnkarra Health Service Corporation	t: 08 9182 0850
South Hedland	Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9172 0400
Wiluna	Ngangganawili Aboriginal Community Health Centre	t: 08 9981 7063
Wyndham	Ngnowar Aerwah	t: 08 9161 1496

METROPOLITAN:

East Perth	Aboriginal Health Division (AHD)	t: 08 9222 4024
	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9421 3888
	Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service	t: 08 9221 1411
Mt Lawley	Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet	t: 08 9370 6109
Mirrabooka	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9344 0444
Maddington	Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service	t: 08 9452 5333
	Moorditch Curlongga	t: 08 9459 3049
Mt Claremont	Statewide Indigenous Mental Health Service	t: 08 9347 6600
Perth	Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA)	t: 08 9227 1631

This Guide uses 'he' and 'she' in turn. Change to suit your child's sex.

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